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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009

IN TODAY'S PAPERS

"The German Model" Suggested for the Kurdish Initiative
Mainstream Sabah reports that the government is working on a "German model" regarding initiatives toward the Kurdish issue. Sabah quotes "an unnamed senior official who participates in National Security Council meetings," as saying, "The new move proposes that citizens of Kurdish origin in Turkey should be given the same rights as Turkish citizens living in Germany." As an example, Sabah lists the steps to be undertaken as follows: Turks in Germany are free to use Turkish names, so Kurds will be allowed to use Kurdish names containing the letters "w", "x" and "q"; Turks in Germany are free to learn their own language, so students in Turkey should be allowed to take optional Kurdish language classes; Turks in Germany enjoy religious freedom and the freedom of association, so Kurds in Turkey should enjoy the same rights; and finally, because Turks in Germany have Turkish language TV and radio broadcasts, the obstacles blocking Kurdish language broadcasts in Turkey should be removed.

Editorial Commentary on the Kurdish Problem

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Interior Minister Atalay's approach is good enough to maintain hopes for resolving the Kurdish problem. The way Atalay described the recent statements from the PKK leadership indicates that Ankara may even consider making the PKK a part of the solution process."

Cengiz Candar wrote in business daily Referans: "Given the recent messages, it is obvious that PKK militants are ready and eager to leave the armed struggle. Achieving this endeavor will require them to find a formula for political action and courage."

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "There is an ongoing optimism amid government circles and the presidency that now is the time to solve the Kurdish problem. If this view is true, we should be able to see a plan for democratization with full parliamentary support. However, no efforts along these lines are happening, and moreover there is no sign of political will. It looks like the so-called 'Kurdish initiative' is doomed to remain as merely lipservice."

Ali Bayramoglu wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Resolving the Kurdish issue requires us to think outside the box. We have tried to separate the Kurds from the PKK before in order to address the problem, but this did not quite work. There are many examples around the world that can serve as a model to solve the issue. Taking the PKK into account in the solution process might be one possible approach."

Government to Set up New Coordination Body for Counter Terrorism
Cumhuriyet, Vatan, Sabah, Zaman, Yeni Safak, Radikal: Today's papers report that Interior Minister Besir Atalay announced plans to establish a new agency in order to coordinate efforts in the fight against terrorism. Minister Atalay said, "The Undersecretariat for Public Order and Security will not have any operational functions, instead, it will form a strategy and pass it to the decision makers." The new agency "will have broad powers and authority and it will be able to ask for any information and documents from the General Staff, the Foreign Ministry, the National Intelligence Agency, the Gendarmerie and the Police department," notes mainstream Vatan.

Agreement to be Reached in June on Nabucco Gas Pipeline
Mainstreams Hurriyet and Milliyet report that an official from the EU said "The partners of the Nabucco pipeline project are expected to sign a deal on June 25 in Ankara." The deal on the Nabucco pipeline project will come as an alternative route to Russian pipelines that run through Ukraine to Europe. The Nabucco pipeline will carry natural gas to European markets from the Caspian basin, the Middle East and Central Asia via Turkey. Milliyet notes that

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Turkey backed down on transit fees and discount issues with Nabucco, and the gas project is supported by both Europe and the USA.

Iraqi President Talabani to Visit Qandil
Mainstream Sabah cites Firat News Agency to report that, prior to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's visit to PKK leaders in Qandil, U.S. forces have deployed some troops and tanks in the area. Reportedly around 1000 troops, including peshmerge and U.S. troops were deployed around Kuzine village in Qandil and U.S. tanks are accompanying the troops.

The U.S. Changes Commander in Afghanistan
Media report that Army Lieutenant-General Stanley McChrystal has been recommended to replace David McKiernan as the U.S. commander of its forces in Afghanistan. Mainstream Milliyet reports, "A New Commander is Appointed in Afghanistan," and notes, "this surprising change comes after intense reactions to a U.S. airstrike in which many civilians were killed." Liberal Radikal reports, "The U.S. changed command in Afghanistan out of what Secretary Gates called 'a need for a new approach and for new military leadership.'" Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Secretary Gates notes this change comes at a time when there is a need for a new approach to the struggle against the Taliban."

Who Used White Phosphorous in Afghanistan?
Today, media is largely implying that the white phosphorous that was allegedly used in an attack on civilians last week was used by the U.S., not the Taliban, and also imply that this may be linked to the change of command announced yesterday. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports in "Phosphorous Was Used in Afghanistan," that "After U.S. war planes killed more than one hundred civilians during airstrikes in two villages, claims have emerged that phosphorous bombs were used in the attack," but the paper does not mention the Pentagon's claim that the Taliban used white phosphorous, but instead notes that "the U.S. commander in Afghanistan was changed following the attack." Mainstream Sabah headlines, "The U.S. Launched Banned White Phosphorous Bombs" and reports "After last week's shocking U.S. air strike against a village that killed 147 civilians, now frightening claims are being made about the attack," and, "The U.S. claims that they do not use phosphorous, and that the Taliban may have used phosphorous," but "human rights groups noted that in 2004 white phosphorous was used in the U.S. attack on Falluja." Liberal Radikal reports, "The controversy deepens over last week's U.S. attack on a village in Afghanistan" over "who used white phosphorous

in the attack," as "The U.S. accuses the Taliban of using white phosphorous." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in, "Suspicious of White Phosphorous in Taliban Operations," that "The U.S. Defense Spokesperson said the U.S. does not use white phosphorous."

Iran Frees U.S. Journalists Roxana Saberi

Most media are reporting Roxana Saberi's release from an Iranian prison in a straightforward manner, with some saying her release was a gesture from Iran to the U.S. Mainstream Haberturk reports, "A Saberi Gesture from Iran to the U.S." and notes, "Obama's intervention in Saberi's case is thought to have affected the court's decision to release her." Mainstream Milliyet headlines, "Obama's First Victory," as "Barack Obama wanted the woman journalist released," and "she was set free yesterday." Liberal Radikal headlines, "Iran Says 'The U.S. Is Not An Enemy Country,' and Releases Saberi." Mainstream Sabah reports simply, "An American Journalist Is Freed."

The Pope's Visit to Israel is Met with Controversy

Media note that the Pope's visit to Israel this week is marked by protests over his past membership to the Nazi youth wing and his support for an independent Palestinian state. Mainstream Haberturk reports, "The Pope Makes Israel Tense," noting "he wants an independent Palestinian state." Mainstream Sabah headlines, "The Pope Gives Support to A Palestinian State." Leftist-nationalist

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Cumhuriyet headlines, "The Pope's Most Sensitive Summit," and claims "In Israel, homosexuals, holocaust survivors, and the far right are all on the same side against the Pope's visit to Israel." In "A 'Nazi Pope' Mutiny in The Sacred Lands," mainstream Vatan reports, "The Pope's five-day visit to Israel was greeted with protests," in which demonstrators called him the "Nazi Pope" due to "his membership in the Nazi party during his youth." Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Zaman calls the visit, "The Pope's Olive Branch to Jews."

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Azerbaijan

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Baku wants to hear directly from PM Erdogan that Nagorno Karabakh is a precondition for the normalization of ties between Ankara and Yerevan. There have been similar statements from Ankara but these statements have not eliminated the dark clouds on bilateral ties. It looks like the main goal of PM Erdogan's trip to Baku today is to fully comfort Baku."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Prime Minister Erdogan goes to Azerbaijan today at 18.00.
- FM Davutoglu met with UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon, UK Foreign Secretary and French Foreign Minister in New York. During his speech at the UN, he issued a call to revitalize the Middle East peace process.
- Nine Mortar shells mistakenly fell on Turkish soil in Hakkari on Monday after Iranian soldiers opened fire on PJAK positions in northern Iran.
- Turkish General Staff announced that bodies of five terrorists were found in a cave in Sirnak.
- Salt-Lake 2009 Military exercises were held in Sereflikochisar which were observed by the TGS Chief, force commanders and 27 foreign military attaches.

World

- A US soldier shoots to death five of his fellow troops at a stress clinic in Baghdad.

- China has confirmed its first case of Swine flu on the Chinese mainland.

JEFFREY